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Wylie

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(54) **DOCKING STATION FOR TABLET DEVICE**

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This patent is subject to a terminal disclaimer.

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See application file for complete search history.

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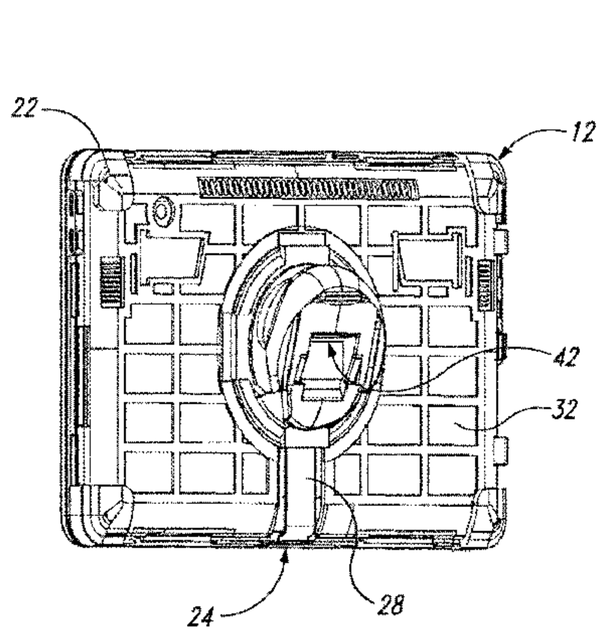
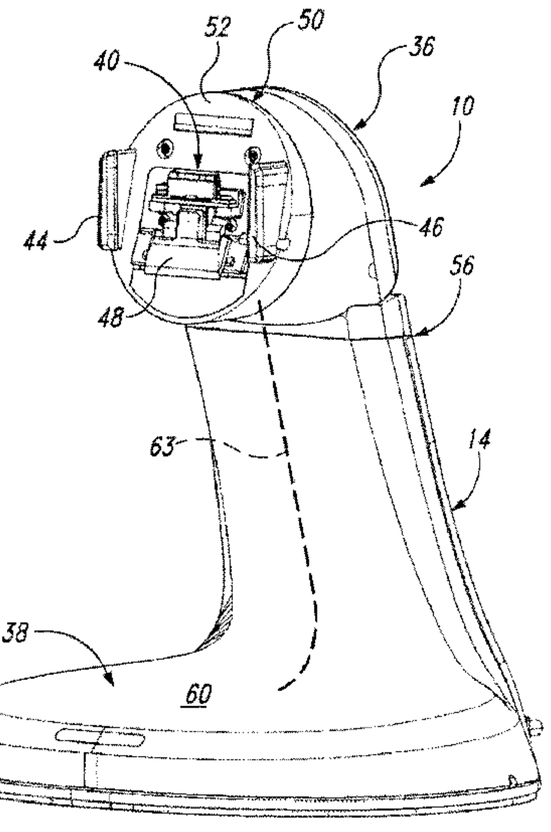
(57) **ABSTRACT**

A docking station for a tablet device includes a security frame that is releasably connected to a pedestal. An upper head portion of the pedestal is rotatable through three degrees of freedom to allow for angular adjustment of the frame as it retains a tablet device. Electrical conductivity is maintained through the rotational connection.

30 Claims, 7 Drawing Sheets





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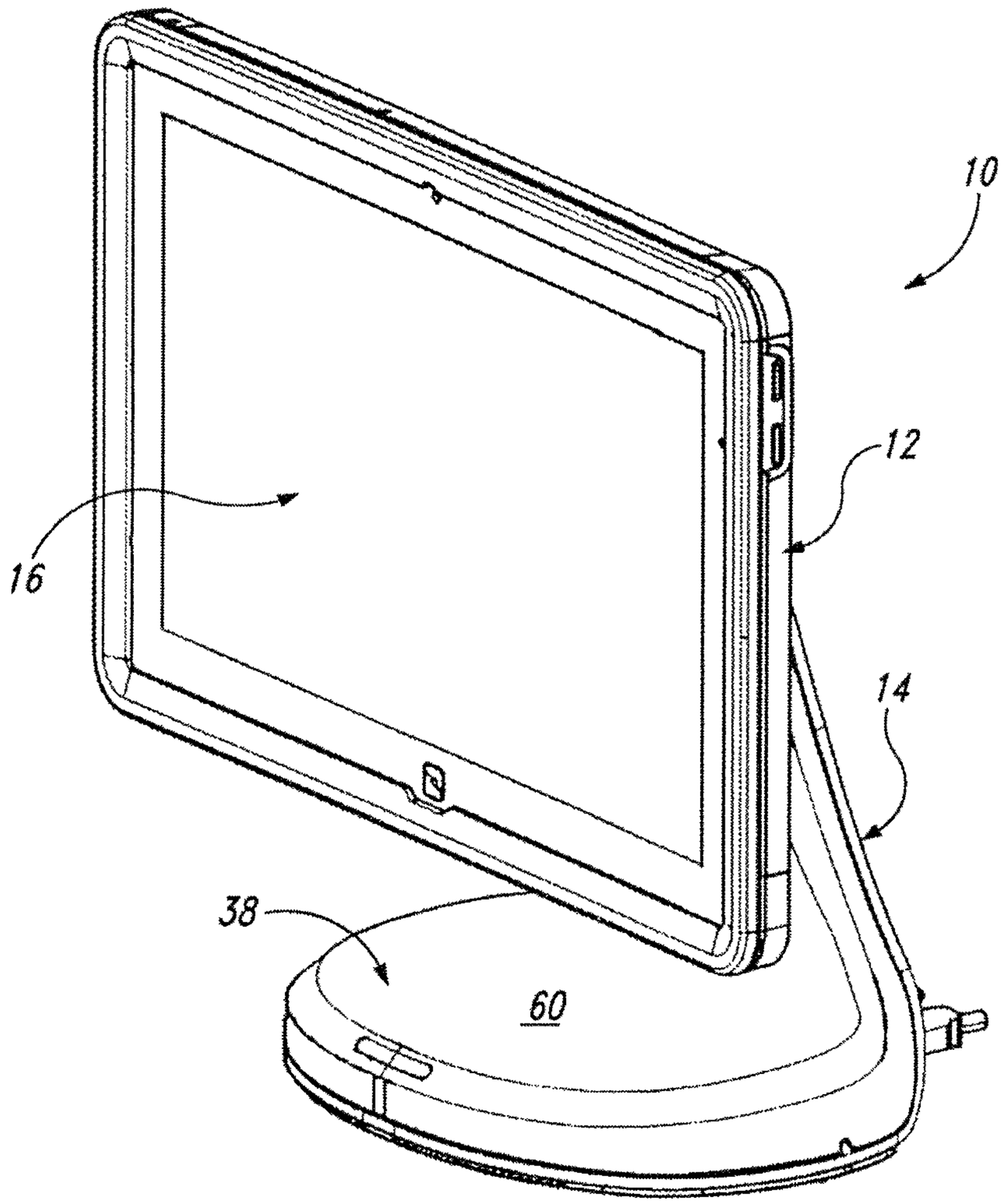
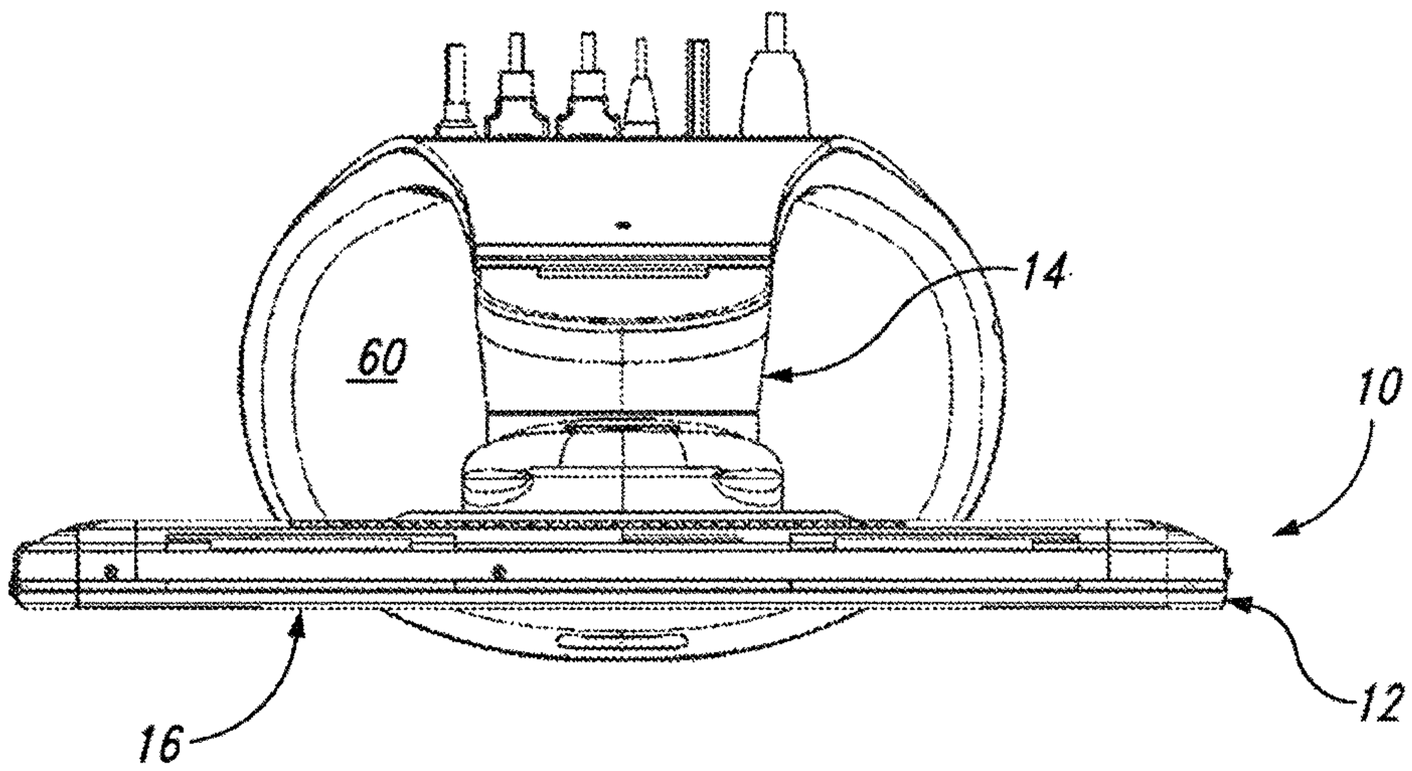


Fig. 1



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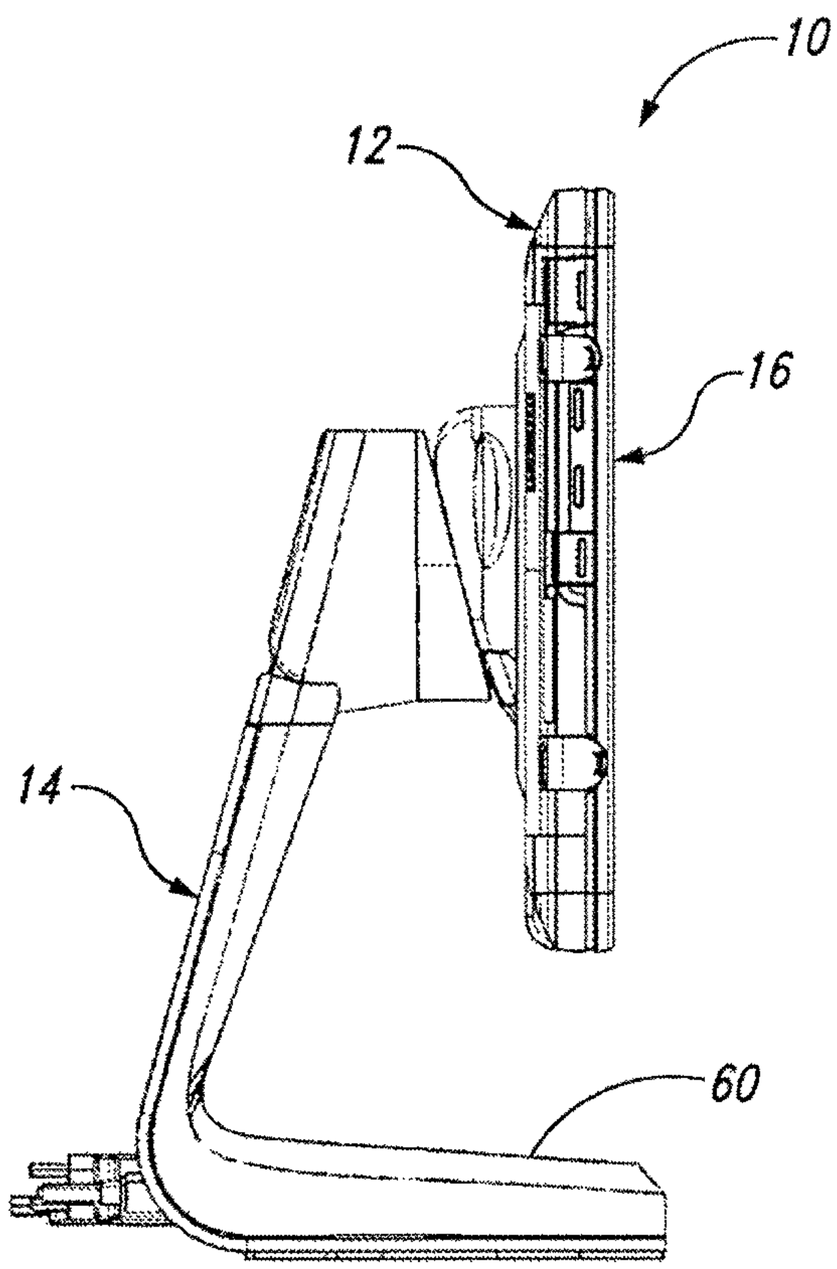

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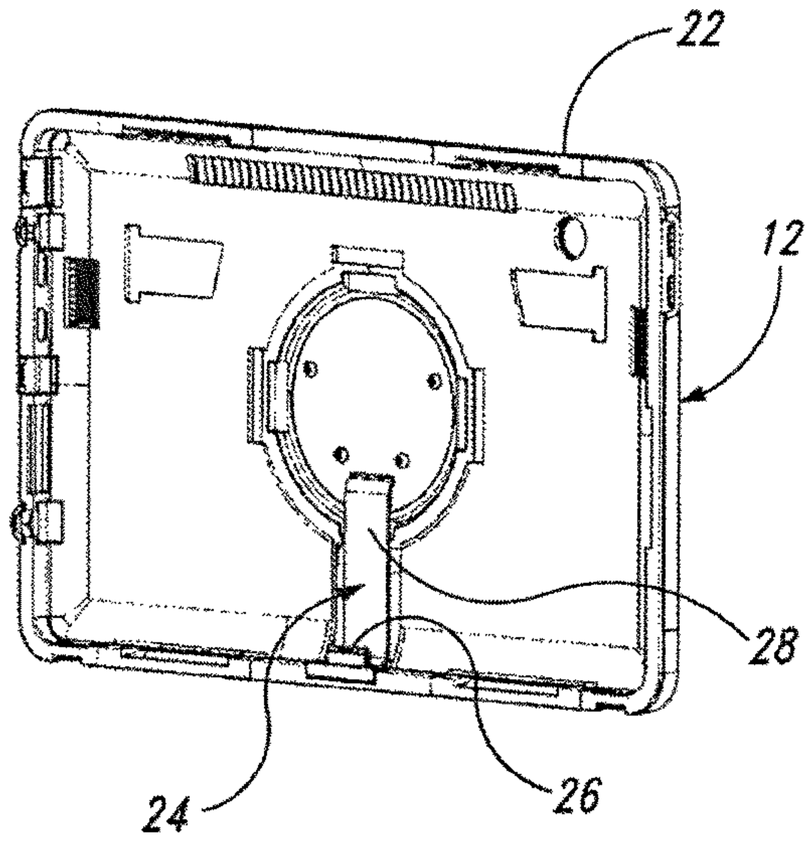

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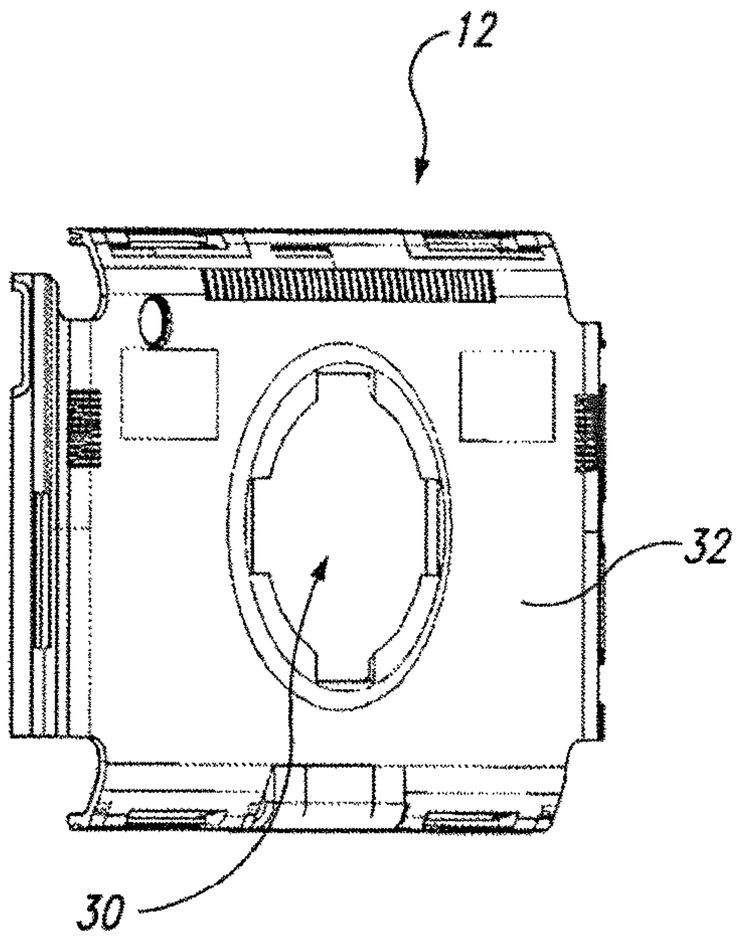

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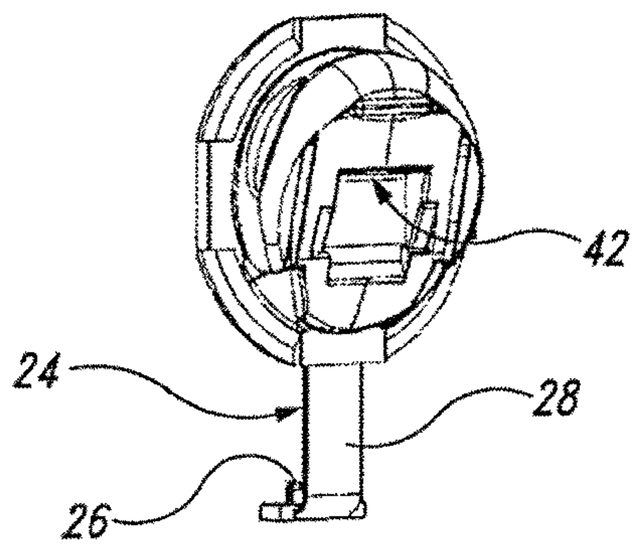

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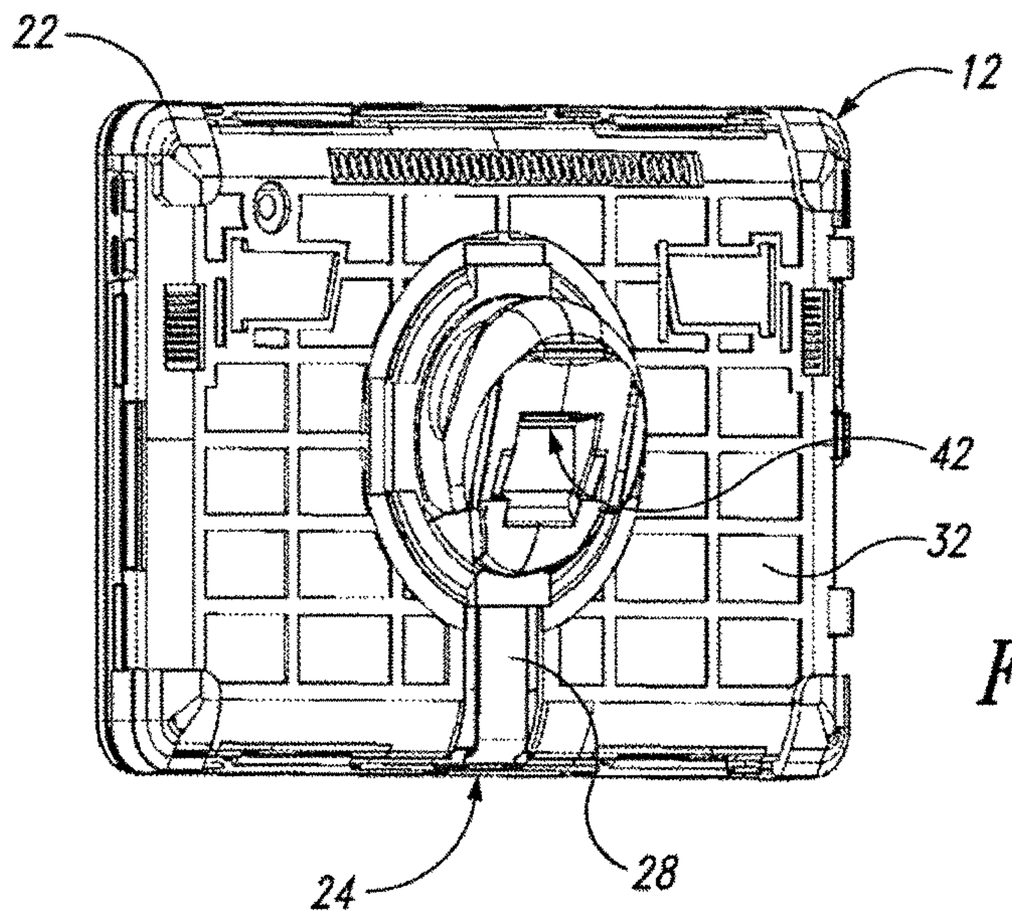

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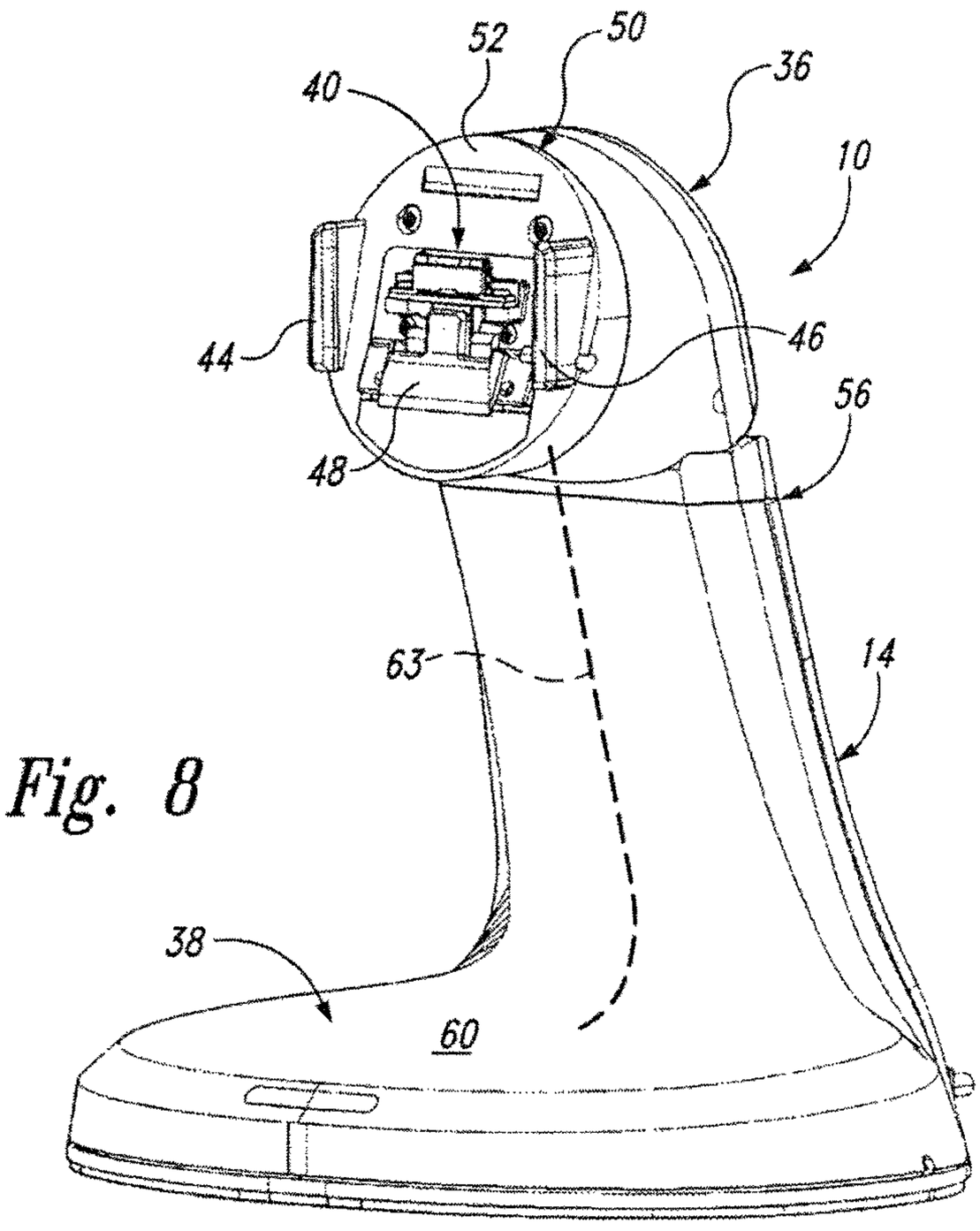

Fig. 8

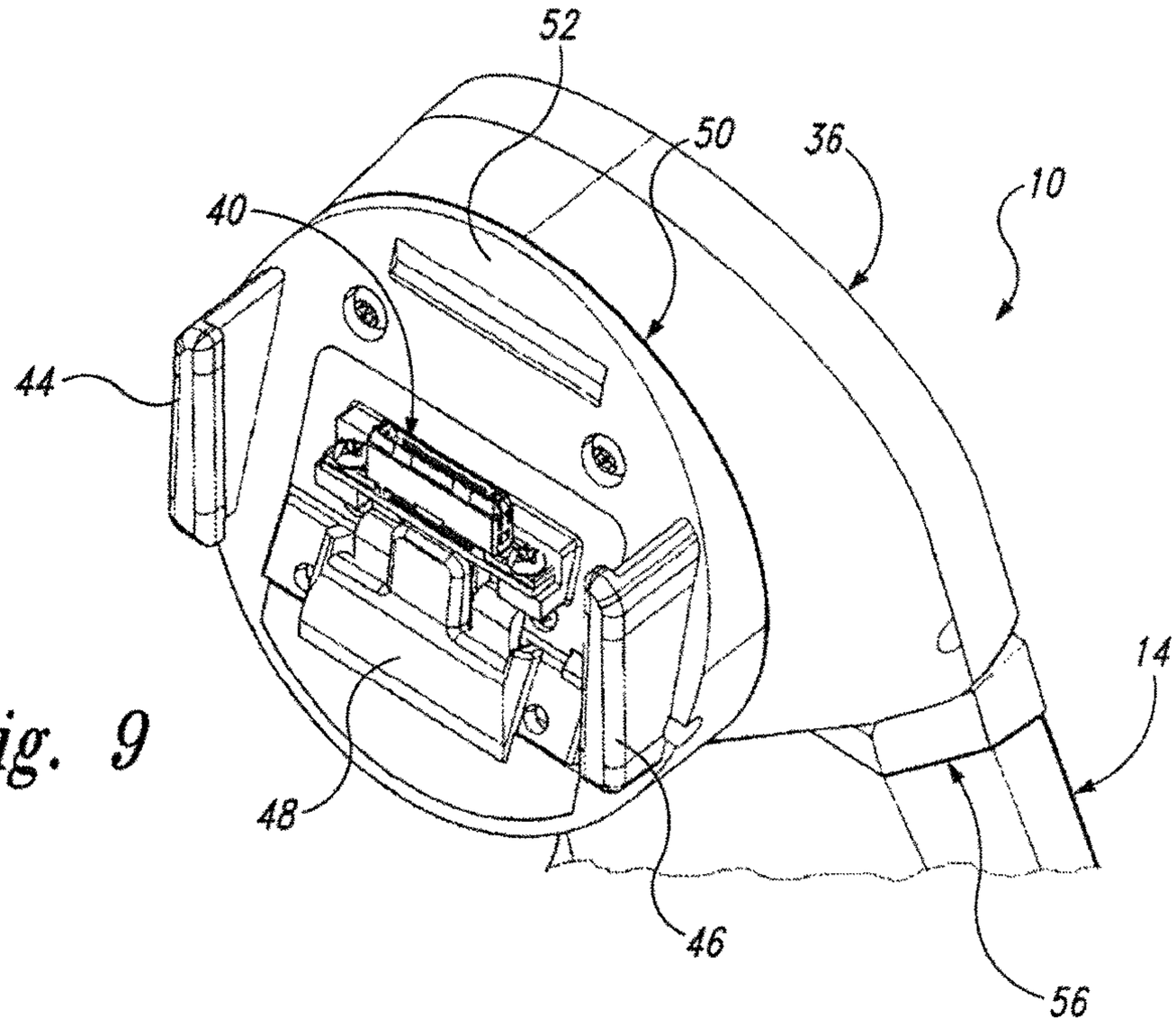

Fig. 9

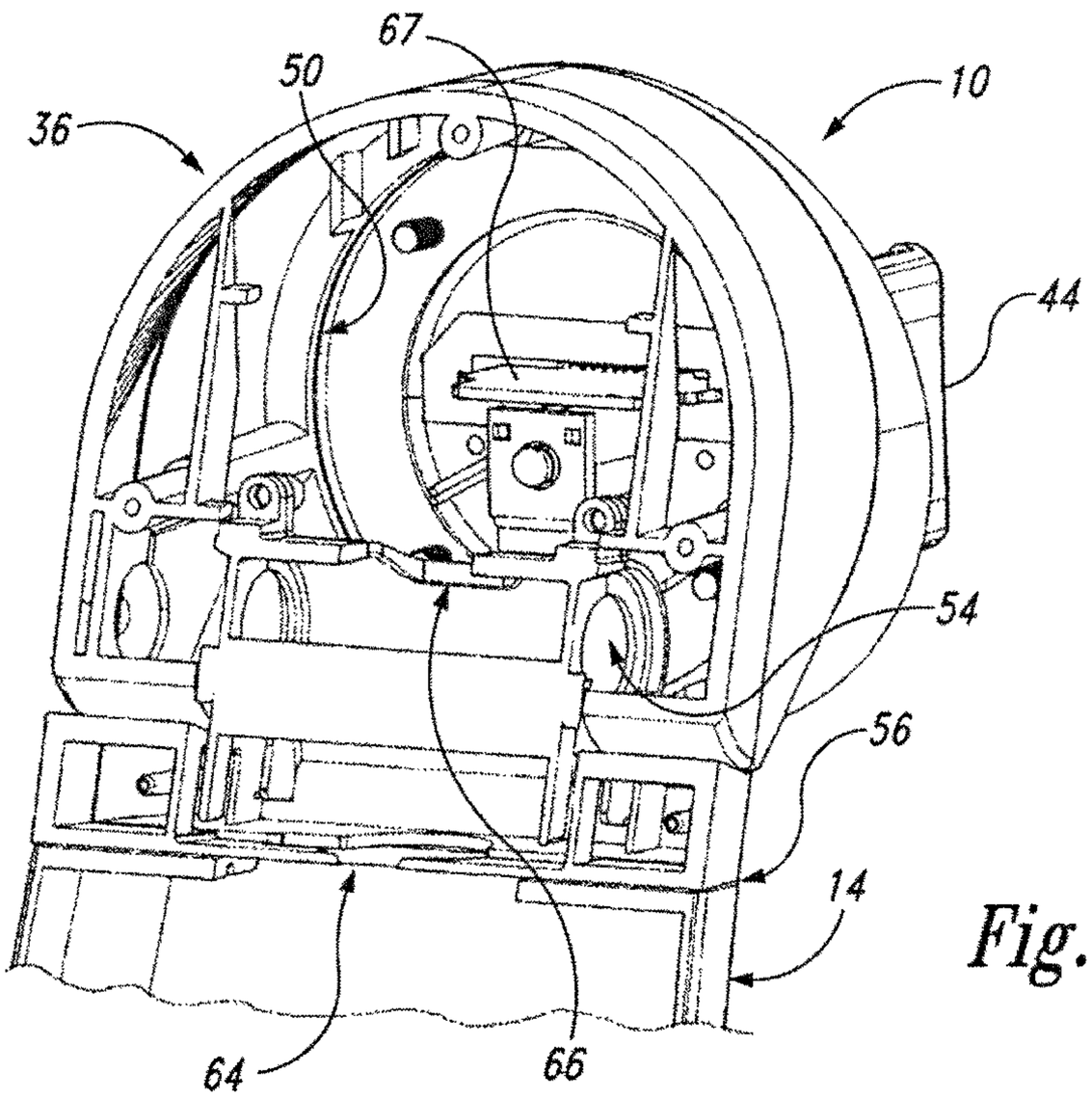

Fig. 10

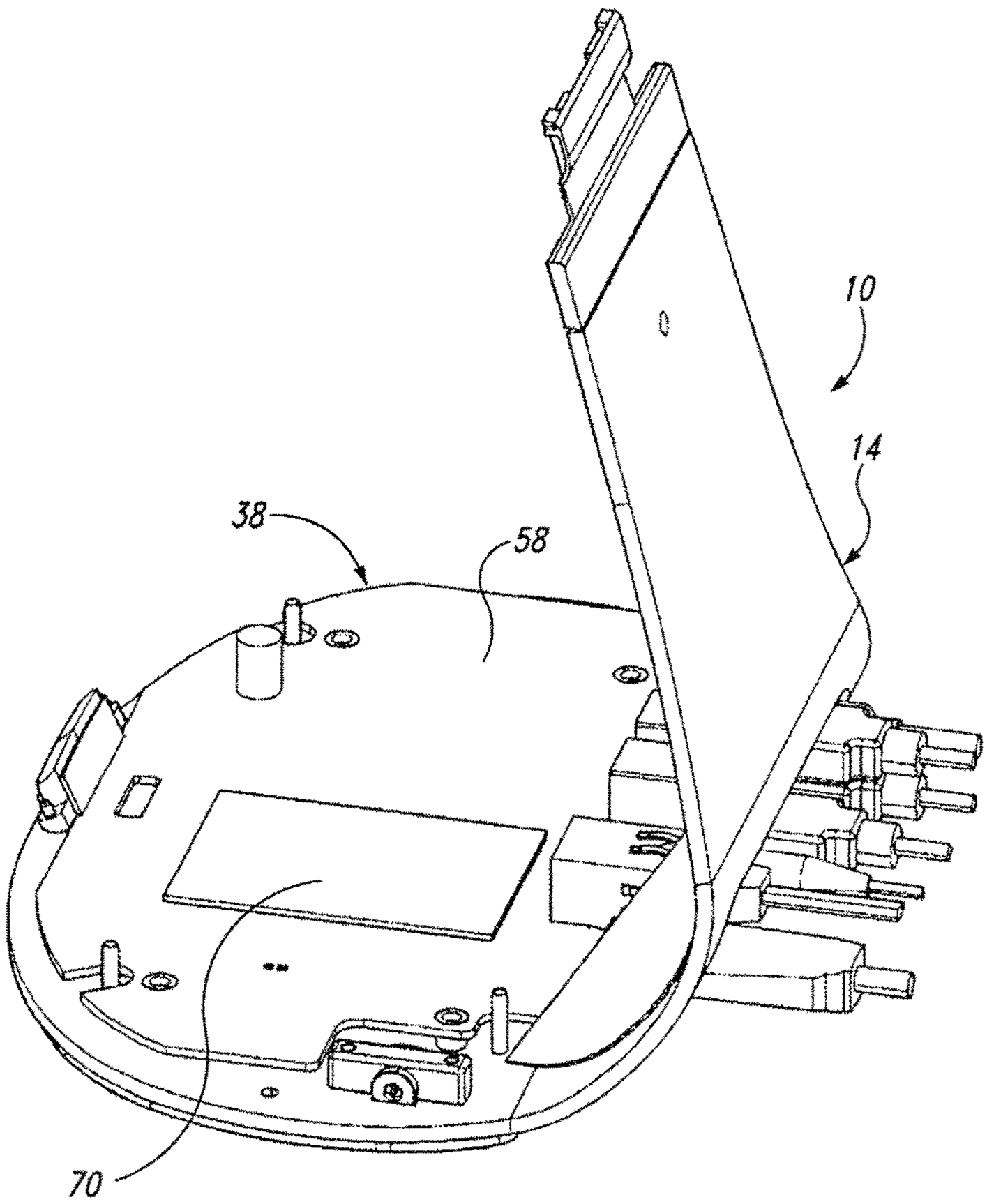

Fig. 11

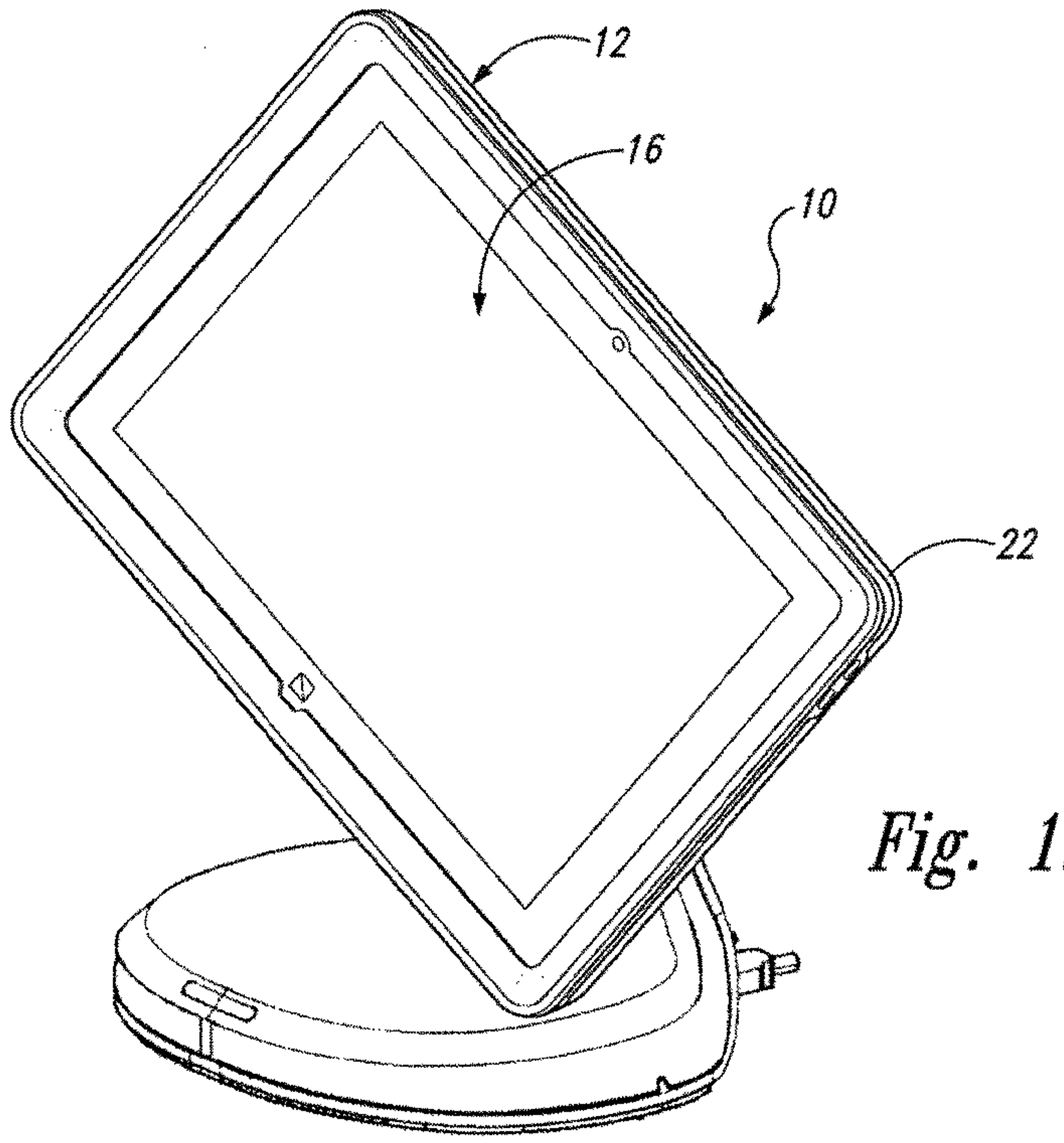

Fig. 12

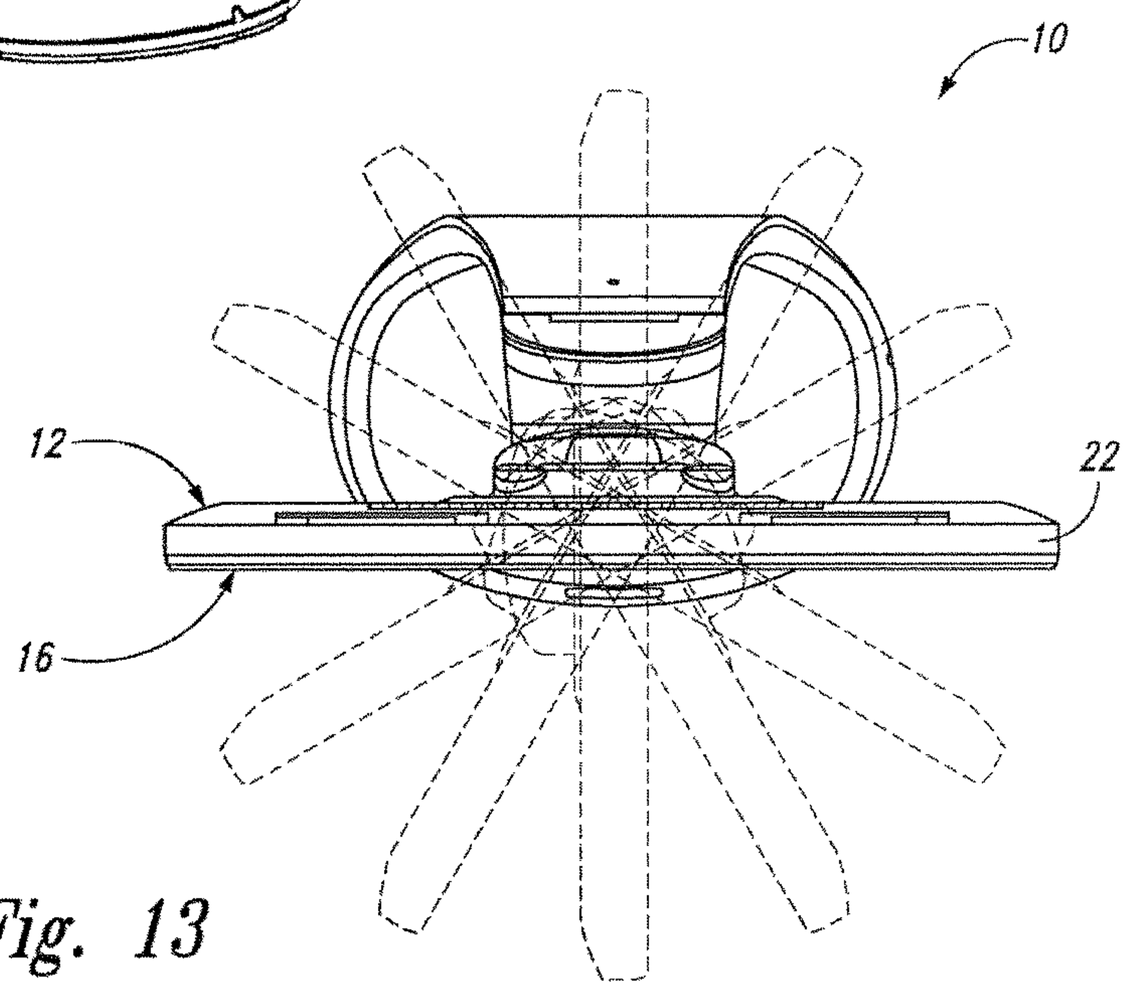

Fig. 13

DOCKING STATION FOR TABLET DEVICE

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application is a continuation of and claims priority under 35 USC 120 to U.S. patent application Ser. No. 15/667,436, filed Aug. 2, 2017, entitled "DOCKING STATION FOR TABLET DEVICE," which is a continuation of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 14/097,171, filed Dec. 4, 2013, now U.S. Pat. No. 9,760,116, entitled "DOCKING STATION FOR TABLET DEVICE," which claims priority under 35 USC 119 to U.S. Provisional Application Ser. No. 61/733,842, filed Dec. 5, 2012, and entitled, "DOCKING STATION FOR TABLET DEVICE," the entire content of each of which is incorporated herein by reference; this application is related to U.S. patent application Ser. No. 15/875,957, filed Jan. 19, 2018, entitled "DOCKING STATION FOR TABLET DEVICE."

TECHNICAL FIELD

The design disclosed below relates to a docking station for a tablet device. More particularly, the design relates to a docking station that allows the tablet device to be used as a work station, or alternatively, the tablet device can be undocked and used remotely from the work station position.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

In general terms, electronic tablet devices (or "tablets") have evolved such that they are now performing many of the functions that were formerly performed by laptop or desktop computers. The processing capability of tablets now allow them to perform standard business functions.

Because of their size and portability, one of the problems associated with the use of tablets in a business setting relates to physical security and/or theft of the device itself. The design disclosed here addresses these problems.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The following is a summary of the various improvements disclosed in this document.

The disclosed design is a docking station that is primarily intended to be used in connection with tablet devices. Tablet devices are well-known electronic devices. They are sometimes called electronic tablets, tablet computers, or just "tablets."

The docking station disclosed here includes a security frame portion for retaining the tablet. The security frame portion surrounds the tablet and provides a framework for carrying the tablet from place-to-place while retained within the security frame.

The frame portion carries or has a first universal adapter that electrically couples the tablet to the frame portion. The universal adapter is designed so that it may electrically couple to the different kinds of connection ports that relate to different brands of tablets. As a person skilled in the art would know, these connection ports provide a means for transmitting power and data to and from the tablet.

The docking station also includes a pedestal, or pedestal portion, that normally rests on a workstation surface or the like. The pedestal has a connecting head portion that provides a means for releasably connecting the above-described frame portion to the pedestal portion. The head portion carries a second universal adapter for electrically coupling

the head portion to the first universal adapter on the frame portion, previously described, when the frame portion is connected or "docked" to the pedestal portion.

Another feature of the design involves a rotational connection between the head portion of the pedestal and a lower base portion of the pedestal. The rotational connection enables three degrees of angular orientation or adjustment of the head portion relative to the base portion. This, in turn, allows for adjustment of the view angle of the tablet when it is docked.

The base portion is connectable to or provides electrical connection ports for at least one electrical signal, although preferably, it includes ports for numerous kinds of electrical connections that normally involve power and data. A conductor pathway is provided through the base member to the universal adapter carried by the head portion by crossing the rotational connection between the head portion and the base portion. This allows electrical connectivity to be maintained regardless of the angular portion of the frame (and tablet) relative to the pedestal.

Another feature of the design involves locking the frame to the pedestal. While this may be accomplished in different ways, the design disclosed here includes an electronic lock for additional security

The foregoing summary will become better understood upon review of the attached drawings which are to be taken in conjunction with the written description set forth below.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

In the drawings, like reference numerals and letters refer to like parts throughout the various views, and wherein:

FIG. **1** is a perspective view of a docking station constructed in accordance with the patent claims;

FIG. **2** is a top view of the docking station;

FIG. **3** is a side view of the docking station;

FIG. **4** is a perspective view of a security frame portion of the docking station that holds or retains a tablet;

FIG. **5** is a perspective view of a back-side part of the security frame portion illustrated in FIG. **4**;

FIG. **6** is a perspective view of an adapter portion of the security frame illustrated in FIG. **4**;

FIG. **7** is a perspective view of the back-side of the security frame portion illustrated in FIG. **4**;

FIG. **8** is a perspective view of a pedestal portion of the docking station illustrated in FIG. **1**;

FIG. **9** is an enlarged view of the head of the pedestal portion illustrated in FIG. **8**;

FIG. **10** is a view like FIG. **9**, but is taken from the back-side perspective of the pedestal portion;

FIG. **11** is a view of the lower portion of the pedestal portion illustrated in FIG. **8**, with a cover removed to reveal an electronics board;

FIG. **12** is a perspective view of the docking station, showing angular rotation of the tablet device; and

FIG. **13** is a top view of FIG. **12** and shows different rotational positions of the tablet device.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Referring now to the drawings, and first to FIG. **1**, indicated generally at **10** is a docking station in accordance with the present disclosure. The docking station **10** includes a security frame portion, indicated generally at **12**, and a pedestal portion, indicated generally at **14**.

The pedestal portion **14** surrounds and captures a tablet device **16**. The outline of the tablet's screen is indicated by dashed line **18** in FIG. **1**. The activating button on the tablet is indicated at **20**.

Although the frame **12** is illustrated here as surrounding and capturing the tablet **16**, it is to be understood that there could be other physical embodiments that perform the same function without completely surrounding the entire or full periphery of the tablet **16**.

Referring now to FIGS. **4-7**, further details of the frame portion **12** will now be described. FIG. **4** illustrates the frame portion **12** without the tablet inside (looking at the front). As can be seen from the Fig., it has a rectangular peripheral edge **22** that captures the edge of the tablet **16**. Depending on the configuration, the edge structure **22** may be provided with built-in openings for different kinds of tablet access ports (for the purpose of pushing buttons on the tablet or accessing jacks, etc.).

The frame **12** carries a first electrical adapter, indicated generally at **24** in FIGS. **4** and **6**, that provides the needed electrical connection to the tablet **16**. The adapter **24** is "universal" in that it has a universal connector fitting **26** that would be shaped to fit a variety of different kinds of tablets (tablet variations are dictated by brand). Typically, and as a person skilled in the art would understand, the universal adapter **24** provides power and data connections for the tablet—i.e., power for the device's battery, etc., and data for network or Internet connections, if hard-wired connections are desired. The conductors for the universal adapter **24** run through a stem portion **28** (see FIG. **6** of the universal adapter **24**).

FIG. **5** illustrates the back-side or back plate **30** of the frame portion **12**. It is surrounded by the edge **22** previously described. As is shown in FIG. **5**, it has an opening **30** for capturing the universal adapter **24** previously described. When all of these components are assembled together, it produces the frame portion of the docking station indicated in FIG. **4** (the front side) and FIG. **7** (the back side).

Referring now to FIG. **8**, reference numeral **14** generally indicates the pedestal portion of the docking station **10**. The pedestal portion includes an upper head portion, indicated generally at **36**, and a lower base portion, indicated generally at **38**. The head portion **36** carries a second universal adapter **40** that connects into a similar connector fitting in a recess of **42** of the first adapter **24**.

The first adapter **24** releasably rests on protrusions **44**, **46** on head portion **36**. It has a conventional catch **48** that allows adapter **24** (and therefore, frame **12**) to be releasably connected to and from the pedestal portion **14** (via the head **36**).

An advantage to the design is that the portion fitting **40** adjacent the front face **52** of head portion **36** creates a reliable interface connection point for engagement/disengagement of the first universal adapter **24** (and frame portion **12**) with the pedestal portion **14**.

The head portion **36** is designed to rotate at three physical positions. The first position is indicated by arrow **50** in FIG. **9**, which illustrates a circular rotation of the front face **52** of the head portion about an axis that would project normally out from face **52**. When the frame portion **12** is mounted to the pedestal **14**, this arrangement provides one degree of freedom of rotation that would allow the tablet **16** to be rotated between portrait and landscape orientations, if desired. Arrow **54** in FIG. **10** points to another area designed to allow the head **36** to rotate up or down to rotationally lift or lower the screen of the tablet for vertical positioning, as desired.

Finally, arrow **56** points to a last position for angularly rotating the head about a vertical or upright axis for angularly adjusting the tablet screen **16** from left-to-right, as desired.

The physical structure of the above rotational connections can take different forms, using different types of pins or moldings that allow one part to rotate relative to another. In all cases, what is important about the design is that it allows three degrees of rotation without interfering with the wiring in the pedestal portion. FIGS. **12** and **13** illustrate different possible rotational positions.

In this last respect, FIG. **11** illustrates base portion **38** with its cover plate **60** removed, thus exposing an electronics control board (ECB) **58** inside the base portion. A series of electrical connector fittings (USB, etc.) are electrically connected to the ECB **58** for providing data or power. These electrical signals are passed, via wiring, or a wiring harness, up through the body of the pedestal **14**, which is hollow. The position of the wiring is schematically indicated by dashed line **63** in FIG. **8**.

Referring to FIG. **10**, the pedestal **14** has openings **64**, **66** that enable the wiring to pass through the head space, and through the physical zone of rotational connections described above. This allows rotation without stressing the wiring. The wiring connects to a board **67** upon which the second adapter fitting **40** rests. The board **67** provides the wiring connections to the fitting **40**.

Finally, the frame portion **12** could be releasably locked to the pedestal portion via a RFID lock if desired. The ECB **58** in the base portion has surface space for a RFID sensor **70** that could detect a wireless keycard, if desired. The sensor would activate locks on the head portion, upon detection of the keycard.

It is to be appreciated that the foregoing description sets forth the best known examples and embodiments. It is not intended that any of the foregoing description be used to limit the scope of the patent protection. Instead, all patent protection is to be defined solely by the patent claim or claims that follow this description, the interpretation of which is to be made according to the legal rules of patent claim interpretation and the rules and regulations of the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office.

What is claimed is:

1. A docking station for a tablet device, the docking station comprising:

a frame assembly for retaining the tablet device, the frame assembly including a frame adapter and a first electrical connection, the frame adapter being electrically connectable to the tablet device via the first electrical connection;

a pedestal assembly including a head portion and a base portion, the head portion being connected to the base portion, the head portion including a pedestal adapter and a second electrical connection, the pedestal adapter being electrically connectable to a power source via the second electrical connection, the pedestal adapter being releasably connectable to the frame adapter;

the pedestal adapter and the frame adapter being configured such that the pedestal assembly and the frame assembly are electrically connected whenever the pedestal adapter is connected to the frame adapter, the pedestal adapter and the frame adapter being configured such that the pedestal assembly is electrically unconnected to the frame assembly whenever the pedestal adapter is not connected to the frame adapter;

the frame assembly being positionable relative to the base portion of the pedestal assembly in a landscape orien-

tation and in a rotated orientation, the rotated orientation being different from the landscape orientation, the pedestal assembly and the frame assembly being configured such that the pedestal adapter and the frame adapter are connected to each other when the frame assembly is in the landscape orientation, the pedestal assembly and the frame assembly being configured such that the pedestal adapter and the frame adapter are connected to each other when the frame assembly is in the rotated orientation, the frame assembly being electrically connected to the pedestal assembly when the frame assembly is in the landscape orientation, the frame assembly being electrically connected to the pedestal assembly when the frame assembly is in the rotated orientation.

2. The docking station as set forth in claim **1** wherein the docking station further comprises a lock assembly moveable between a locked condition and an unlocked condition, the lock assembly being configured to lock the frame assembly to the pedestal assembly in the locked condition, the lock assembly being configured to permit detachment of the frame assembly from the pedestal assembly when the lock assembly is in the unlocked condition.

3. The docking station as set forth in claim **1** wherein the frame adapter includes a first electrical interface and the pedestal adapter includes a second electrical interface, the first electrical interface being configured to connect with the second electrical interface in a manner such that the pedestal assembly and the frame assembly are electrically connected when the pedestal adapter is connected to the frame adapter.

4. The docking station as set forth in claim **1** wherein the head portion of the pedestal assembly is configured to pivot about a horizontal axis to adjust a vertical position of the frame assembly when the pedestal adapter is connected to the frame adapter.

5. The docking station as set forth in claim **1** wherein the head portion further comprises a face, a head portion axis being generally normal to the face, the frame assembly being generally normal to the head portion axis when in the landscape orientation, the frame assembly being generally normal to the head portion axis when in the rotated orientation.

6. A docking station for a tablet device, the docking station comprising:

a frame assembly for retaining the tablet device, the frame assembly including a frame adapter, a first electrical connection and a first electrical interface, the first electrical interface being electrically connectable to the tablet device via the first electrical connection;

a pedestal assembly including a head portion and a base portion, the head portion being connected to the base portion, the head portion including a pedestal adapter, a second electrical connection and a second electrical interface, the second electrical interface being electrically connectable to a power source via the second electrical connection, the pedestal adapter being releasably connectable to the frame adapter;

the first electrical interface being electrically connected to the second electrical interface whenever the pedestal adapter is connected to the frame adapter, the first electrical interface being electrically unconnected to the second electrical interface whenever the pedestal adapter is not connected to the frame adapter;

the frame assembly being positionable relative to the base portion of the pedestal assembly in a landscape orientation and in a rotated orientation, the rotated orientation being different from the landscape orientation, the pedestal assembly and the frame assembly being configured such that the pedestal adapter and the frame adapter are connected to each other when the frame assembly is in the landscape orientation, the pedestal assembly and the frame assembly being configured such that the pedestal adapter and the frame adapter are connected to each other when the frame assembly is in the rotated orientation, the frame assembly being electrically connected to the pedestal assembly when the frame assembly is in the landscape orientation, the frame assembly being electrically connected to the pedestal assembly when the frame assembly is in the rotated orientation.

7. The docking station as set forth in claim **6** wherein the docking station further comprises a lock assembly moveable between a locked condition and an unlocked condition, the lock assembly being configured to lock the frame assembly to the pedestal assembly in the locked condition, the lock assembly being configured to permit detachment of the frame assembly from the pedestal assembly when the lock assembly is in the unlocked condition.

8. The docking station as set forth in claim **7** wherein the lock assembly comprises a sensor configured to receive a wireless signal, the lock assembly being configured to move from the locked condition to the unlocked condition upon the sensor receiving the wireless signal.

9. The docking station as set forth in claim **8** wherein the sensor is configured to receive an RFID signal.

10. The docking station as set forth in claim **6** wherein the first electrical interface is a first connector fitting and the second electrical interface is a second connector fitting.

11. The docking station as set forth in claim **10** wherein the first connector fitting is a female connector fitting and the second connector fitting is a male connector fitting.

12. The docking station as set forth in claim **6** wherein the first electrical connection includes a connector fitting, the connector fitting being connectable to the tablet device.

13. The docking station as set forth in claim **12** wherein the frame assembly further includes a stem portion, the connector fitting being electrically connected to the frame adapter via the stem portion.

14. The docking station as set forth in claim **6** wherein the first electrical interface forms a portion of the frame adapter and the second electrical interface forms a portion of the pedestal adapter.

15. The docking station as set forth in claim **6** wherein the head portion further comprises a face, a head portion axis being generally normal to the face, the frame assembly being generally normal to the head portion axis when in the landscape orientation, the frame assembly being generally normal to the head portion axis when in the rotated orientation.

16. A docking station for a tablet device, the docking station comprising:

a frame assembly for retaining the tablet device, the frame assembly including a frame adapter, a first electrical connection and a first electrical interface, the first electrical interface being electrically connectable to the tablet device via the first electrical connection;

a pedestal assembly including a head portion and a base portion, the head portion being connected to the base portion, the head portion including a pedestal adapter, a second electrical connection and a second electrical interface, the second electrical interface being electrically connectable to a power source via the second electrical connection, the pedestal adapter being releasably connectable to the frame adapter;

the first electrical interface being electrically connected to the second electrical interface whenever the pedestal adapter is connected to the frame adapter, the first electrical interface being electrically unconnected to the second electrical interface whenever the pedestal adapter is not connected to the frame adapter;

the head portion being configured such that the frame assembly is rotatable relative to the base portion of the pedestal assembly between a landscape orientation and a rotated orientation while the frame adapter is connected to the pedestal adapter, the rotated orientation being different from the landscape orientation, the pedestal assembly and the frame assembly being configured such that the pedestal adapter and the frame adapter are connected to each other when the frame assembly is in the landscape orientation, the pedestal assembly and the frame assembly being configured such that the pedestal adapter and the frame adapter are connected to each other when the frame assembly is in the rotated orientation, the first electrical interface being electrically connected to the second electrical interface when the frame assembly is in the landscape orientation, the first electrical interface being electrically connected to the second electrical interface when the frame assembly is in the rotated orientation.

17. The docking station as set forth in claim **16** wherein the docking station further comprises a lock assembly moveable between a locked condition and an unlocked condition, the lock assembly being configured to lock the frame assembly to the pedestal assembly in the locked condition, the lock assembly being configured to permit the detachment of the frame assembly from the pedestal assembly when the lock assembly is in the unlocked condition.

18. The docking station as set forth in claim **17** wherein the lock assembly comprises a sensor configured to receive a wireless signal, the lock assembly being configured to move from the locked condition to the unlocked condition upon the sensor receiving the wireless signal.

19. The docking station as set forth in claim **16** wherein the frame assembly further includes a front portion and a back portion, the front portion being connectable to the back portion, the frame assembly being configured to sandwich the tablet device between the front portion and the back portion when the front portion is connected to the back portion.

20. The docking station as set forth in claim **19** wherein the frame adapter is connected to the back portion.

21. The docking station as set forth in claim **16** wherein the head portion of the pedestal assembly further includes a protrusion, the frame adapter of the frame assembly being configured to engage the protrusion when the frame adapter is connected to the pedestal adapter.

22. The docking station as set forth in claim **16** wherein the base portion of the pedestal assembly includes a hollow portion.

23. The docking station as set forth in claim **22** wherein the second electrical connection includes a cable, the cable extending through the hollow portion.

24. The docking station as set forth in claim **16** wherein the first electrical connection includes a connector fitting, the connector fitting being connectable to the tablet device.

25. The docking station as set forth in claim **24** wherein the frame assembly further includes a stem portion, the connector fitting being electrically connected to the frame adapter via the stem portion.

26. The docking station as set forth in claim **16** wherein the first electrical interface is a first connector fitting and the second electrical interface is a second connector fitting, the second connector fitting being connectable to the first connector fitting.

27. The docking station as set forth in claim **26** wherein the first connector fitting is a female connector fitting and the second connector fitting is a male connector fitting, the male connector fitting being insertable into the female connector fitting.

28. The docking station as set forth in claim **16** wherein the rotated orientation is a portrait orientation.

29. The docking station as set forth in claim **16** wherein the head portion of the pedestal assembly is configured to pivot about a horizontal axis to adjust a vertical position of the frame assembly when the pedestal adapter is connected to the frame adapter.

30. The docking station as set forth in claim **16** wherein the frame assembly further includes a front portion connectable to a back portion, the frame assembly being configured such that the front portion and the back portion collectively surround the tablet device when the front portion is connected to the back portion, the frame adapter being connected to the back portion.

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